

A Judge, Jacob Zuma and the Practitioners of Post-truth Politics: Micro-history, Singularization and Context

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2 December 2019

So, please show me something, anything really, that does not have a context or does not have micro-macro links from which 'big historical questions' cannot or should not be asked or answered. (Anonymous)

ABSTRACT

Former president Zuma's false narrative (and ANC myth) have been exposed. It reveals a little more of ANC secrecy and an organizational culture driven by many of its incumbents in their *neo*-hegemonic positions of domination in post-apartheid society at the expense of all South Africans. The Judge's **Order** alludes to far-reaching consequences for the perpetuation false narratives against the rising tide of post-truth (PT) *praxis*. The application of Micro-history as an analytical historical *approach*, has a valuable role to play in freeing South African historiography from traditional thinking, mostly in class, race and capital terms. This study shows how a single event (seemingly a small one) has far-reaching impact not only on social media, but also conversely. This all bodes well for future Micro-historical study should such finds its ways into South African academia.

Key words: apartheid spy, contextualization, false narrative, Hanekom, known enemy, Micro-history, singularization, Zuma.

1. Introduction

On 25 July 2019, former president Jacob Zuma posted a tweet on his Twitter account making Mr Derek Hanekom out as ‘a known enemy agent’. Hanekom took Zuma to court and won. Subsequently Zuma appealed but in early November 2019 lost this appeal.

KwaZulu-Natal High Court Judge, D Pillay, viewed Hanekom ‘...as a politician with a reputation that has considerable currency...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [14]). Not only was Hanekom over the past 25 years an African National Congress (ANC) National Executive Committee (NEC) member from 1994, but he also held numerous ministerial positions: Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs from 1994 to 1999; Deputy Minister of Science and Technology from April 2004 to October 2012; Minister of Science and Technology from 4 October 2012 to 25 May 2014; Minister of Tourism from May 2014 to March 2017 and February 2018 to May 2019. Subsequently he resigned as member of parliament (MP).

The purpose of this article is to investigate three interrelated themes: *the court judgment* against Zuma; the *praxis of Micro-history* as an autonomous subfield of history, and the *principles of PT praxis*.

From a methodological perspective, and following the practice of Judge Pillay when she explained that ‘I quote extensively so that the litigants “speak” [...] for themselves in their affidavits so that they are not diluted or misrepresented by my paraphrasing’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6 [13]), is also how I will treat the written sources herein, namely, ‘to stay close to the sources.’

Following the Introduction (Section one) is the prime source (Section two), the Hanekom v Zuma (D6316/2019 [2019] ZAKZDHC 16 (16 September 2019) **Order**. The next section places Zuma’s tweet in context of social media’s micro-blogging and in relation to some principles of Micro-history. Section four lists key points about what this litigation is all about, and how Zuma operates, is the focus of Section five. The related question of PT *praxis* in Section six, precedes the Conclusion.

This study suggests that a Micro-history of a seemingly small incident in the life of a ‘Big Man’ does not necessarily have to end up in ‘Big Man History’. Similarly, micro-historical ‘Big Questions’ and their ‘Big Answers’ do not necessarily threaten the autonomy of Micro-history. Therefore, the contention is that ‘micro-level investigations’ and the ‘macro-level conclusions’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 9) can go a long way to ‘...open our ears to the multiplicity of voices...’ (Magnússon in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 135) of their investigations.

2. The court order

On 6 September 2019, Judge Pillay ruled in favor of Hanekom, as follows:

**THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA
KWAZULU NATAL DIVISION,
DURBAN**

CASE NO. D6316/2019

In the matter between:

DEREK HANEKOM

APPLICANT

and

JACOB GEDLEYIHLEKISA ZUMA

RESPONDENT

ORDER

1. It is declared that the allegations made about the applicant, Derek Hanekom in the following statement posted as a tweet, are defamatory and false:

‘I’m not surprised by @Julius_S_Malema revelations regarding @Derek_Hanekom. It is part of the plan I mentioned at the Zondo Commission. @Derek_Hanekom is a known enemy agent.’

2. It is declared that the respondent, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma’s publication of his tweet above was and continues to be unlawful.

3. The respondent is ordered to remove the tweet within 24 hours from all media platforms including by deleting it from his Twitter account.

4. The respondent is ordered, within 24 hours, to publish on Twitter from his Twitter account (@PresJGZuma) the following apology:

‘On 25 July 2019, I published a tweet which alleges that Derek Hanekom is a known enemy agent. I unconditionally withdraw this allegation and apologise for making it as it is false.’

5. The respondent is interdicted from publishing any statement that says or implies that the applicant is or was an enemy agent or an apartheid spy.

6. The interdict in the preceding paragraph does not bar the respondent from testifying truthfully, as he is required to, at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector Including Organs of State.

7. The applicant is awarded damages against the respondent, the quantum of which is yet to be determined.

8. The determination of the quantum of damages of R500 000 claimed by the applicant against the respondent is referred for oral evidence.

9. The respondent is ordered to pay the applicant’s costs, including the costs of two counsel.

10. The matter is adjourned sine die.

D. Pillay J

Judge of the High Court of KwaZulu-Natal

3. Zuma's tweet, setting the scene and Micro-history

Considering that a '[b]log is the most rudimentary form of social media...' (Journal 2013: 1), then a tweet on Twitter can rightfully be considered a micro-blog. If it is correct '[t]hat the utopian vision of internet assumed the accessibility and availability of freedom of expression through Internet' links, and that the 'democratic participation of bloggers in social media are considered a bridge between social media and online public opinion', then micro-historians can gain insight into particular real-time issues in life by having an understanding of the nature of online public opinion in social media through having access to the lived experiences of bloggers.

This study would have benefitted from an investigation into the tweets of blogging views. They were, however, not the focus herein. The focus here is on the view that '[h]istorians cannot escape the instantaneous global electronic flow of communication and information' (Engelbrecht 2014: 1). In fact, we are all very much increasingly subjected to it.

Posting short text messages as tweets from a Twitter account – largely on mobile webs – is a form of micro-blogging that enables users to communicate real-time concise messages with a global online virtual audience. Such social media communication is convenient with an instantaneous large reach (Nations 2019). As a result, one can truly speak of the immediate globalising of, in this case, the micro. A micro-blog is therefore probably the smallest form of Micro-history. These short messages or posts are usually context-bound and reflect aspects of far-reaching Micro-history, meaning potentially reaching across the globe. Far-reaching does not only refer to the relative geographic size, but also far-reaching consequential impact. Considering that many world leaders today conduct their international global politics through tweets, it is fair to say that micro-*politics* from the ground up, do the same. Zuma's tweet is a micro-blog of micro-political nature and therefore *history* that is studied (in this study) from a *micro-historical approach*.

From this perspective, micro-blogging is transforming the way we think and (hopefully) write about the past, present and future. According to Rogers (2015), blogging is no longer simply a tool enabling us to reach a wider audience. Instead, '...this interactive medium might allow us to view our sources from alternative perspectives, re-present and understand them in new ways, and even reconceptualise our relationship with the past', present and future. Essentially, micro-blogs have the '...potential to "turn history upside down" and by breaking down traditional hierarchies...' they are the best form of micro-social history-from-below. As such they are simultaneously a resource of immense value. Micro-blogging has done exactly that for Zuma: it turned his traditional thinking and beliefs on its head, as will become clearer in the following pages.

Although micro-blogging is small in text, it does not stand separate from a larger context, but as Micro-history does, focusses on the small event within a larger context. Generally speaking micro-blogging's (e.g. tweets) wide geo-political reach and impact, through using only a few words, are mostly

posted in contested space. So viewed, court cases and crime history can be good examples for micro-historical study. To this effect, '[l]egal disputes can offer ample material for the "thick description"' which micro-historians employ in their research (Rogers 2016). Amongst many, the following two comments by MK Desai (2105: 1, 2) about blogging are relevant for this study: firstly, the blogosphere, Desai maintains, is no longer the exclusive domain of English-speaking, urban, elite, upper-class. Secondly:

Today blogging can be accepted as form of livelihood, valid form of protest, one of the ways to maintain personal identity and presence, marketing and promotion tool, a personal space for ventilating emotions or all rolled in one.

On the other hand, conducting Micro-history of a singular through, or with the help of, micro-blogging, opens fruitful ways of understanding for instance, the *mentalité* of perpetuating historical myth or false narratives, as is the case in this study. Micro-history changes contemporary conceptions of Micro-history to its core.

From an everyday perspective, students of social media can argue that Zuma's tweet is just one of many thousands of tweets posted daily on social media by South Africans – one person badmouthing another. After all, people do it all the time in the public domain, so what is the 'big deal' or fuss about? In the *historical context of the ANC*, the following view of Matthew Graham (2014: 3), is important:

Since 1994, the ANC has systematically attempted to monopolise the past to cement and reaffirm its hegemonic position in South African society. As the past is reinterpreted and rewritten, historical facts are open to manipulation in order to propagate certain narratives and truths to serve particular domestic and international constituents. The ANC has steadily worked to reclaim historic events as its own and exclude others from the liberation narrative, exaggerating some of its contributions. This notion of creating a distinct sense of "otherness" can clearly be seen in a number of cases in which the ANC has sought to discredit rival anti-apartheid movements, even disregarding the efforts of affiliated organisations whose activities do not strengthen its own preferred conceptualization of the past.

One can add that Zuma has acted in the above manner against one of 'his own' – Mr Hanekom. This is captured in Judge Pillay's 'Order' in pages 2 and 3 (above). Needless to remind, political parties '...exist to secure power: it would be foolish to expect them to be squeamish about the means' (Barraclough 1986: 150). Recent ANC history has shown how '...neo-colonialism (or "unofficial colonization") is characterized by the spatial separation between the colonizing power over colonial

inhabitants [...] through a process of ‘societal creeping’ to enhance selfish capitalist interests (Engelbrecht 2019e: 4; 6). Nevertheless, and as a consequence of this behavior, not even Zuma turned out to be the ‘ultimate political survivor’ (Basson and Du Toit 2017: xii).

It is the single event of thinking, typing and posting the tweet by one person, Zuma, about another person, Hanekom, on social media’s Twitter platform and then to have sent it into the world, that developed a historical incident of far-reaching consequences in line of what Graham (2014) considered as ‘objective’ historical writing. This tweet also gives an opportunity to undertake a *micro*-historical study of the incident itself and of the related unfolding events. Amongst other things, this article attempts history of a *specific* kind – *Micro*-history, different from e.g. *global* history, *political* history, *economic* history, or *environmental* history – with characteristics of its own. *Micro*-history is a *specific historical approach*. It does not compete with other forms of historical *approaches*, but instead, is complementary to them because of its own *methodology* and objectives.

To set the tone for her **Judgement**, Judge Pillay started the **Introduction** of the **Judgement** with an extract from Oliver Tambo’s closing address at the Morogoro Consultative Conference (25 April – 1 May 1969, Morogoro, Tanzania), by quoting from Callinicos (2004: 336) the following:

Be vigilant, comrades. The enemy is vigilant. Beware the wedge driver! Men who creep from ear to ear, driving wedges among us; who go around creating splits and divisions.

Beware the wedge driver! Watch his poisonous tongue’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 3).

Apart from the obvious embarrassment of this court judgement against Zuma (for him and the ANC), is the contention in this article that Judge Pillay’s **Order** have far-reaching legal implications for the future use of history for political purposes. The obvious affected parties, the argument goes, are future writers, social media users, reporters and the average man in the street. In fact, it has consequences for everyone wanting to misuse history by perpetuating false narratives to make a point, specifically, when doing so for political gain.

From a *methodological* point of view, whilst Magnússen (2003: 8) argued that ‘I am afraid that historians tend to be occupied with larger context sacrificing the gain that a detailed analysis might bring to their research’, contextualization in this litigation however, ‘was everything’. The reality is that this case against Zuma hinged on context. The Judge said:

The issue boils down to interpreting Mr Zuma’s tweet in the political *context* in which he published it’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6: [13]. Emphasis added).

This article also makes a case for the writing of Micro-history as an historical *approach* in its own right. Heloise Husson (n.d.: 1, 8) for example, argued that Micro-history

...along with other methodologies [...] can be considered a necessary complementary method to analyze and complement traditional political history. [...] ...microhistory is in effect compatible if not desirable for the completeness of grand narrative and large structures researches and thinkings.

In addition, this article highlights the thin line on which PT practitioners find themselves. This will become clearer in the analysis of this litigation and the links to the views of Graham (2014) including the contextualization pointers that can be derived from Micro-history.

The *micro-historical approach* requires ‘thick description’ of the events. From a *methodological perspective*, the reader will find many references, citations, cross-references and unfortunately an (over)abundance of italicized text to draw attention for the ease of focus. This is partly because of the ‘advances as “true”’, allegations, ambiguities, assertions, beliefs, claims, contradictions, defamatory statements, denials, distortions, exaggerations, false statements, implications, inconsistencies, inferences, insinuations, innuendos, meanings given, misconceptions, misrepresentations, mistaken assumptions, and suggestions in this Judgement. These terminologies are important in respect of Graham’s study about ANC’s myth of liberation solidarity (Graham 2014), PT *praxis*, and the Judge’s ruling.

Secondly, and to borrow the concept ‘point of entry’ from Professor IM Szi­jártó (in Magnússon and Szi­jártó 2013: 13) for this article, is Zuma’s tweet of 25 July 2019. That is where it all started. Accepting that there may be no general agreement about this point of entry, is not a moot point, because more criticism might be piled up since critics would find having to ‘research backwards and forwards’ relative to this point of entry, problematic. This methodological burden must be evaluated against the following words of Judge Pillay: ‘...extracts from his [Zuma’s] affidavit locates the inferences following from his tweet to times *before* the attempts to recall Mr Zuma.’ The historical *context* of this case dates ‘...way back into history, into the anti-apartheid struggle, to the time when the ANC was at war with the SANDF’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 16 [52]. Emphasis added).

Lastly, and staying with advice from Szi­jártó (2013: 11), since ‘[t]here are certainly other ways of defining microhistory’, it also ‘seems advisable that historians give parallel explanations so that their readers can see their arbitrary character right away.’ Such methodological pluralism, MPV Franco (2017) argued, need not be a limitation.

Despite some shortcomings, definitions remain necessary but challenging because they are similar to theories ‘...in themselves not constant but important in the formation of scientific knowledge’ (Engelbrecht 2019b: 1; Rion 2011: 1). The *historical process* in general, including *historical understanding*, is an ‘act of knowing [which] implies definition, and we usually define something by tracing its limits, its *finis*’ (Szi­jártó 2017: 193). This results in Micro-history being defined ‘in many

different ways' (Magnússon in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 147) [...] partly contradictory' in nature (Szijártó 2017: 194). The advantage, Szijártó (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 9) claims, is that

[t]he differences between these approaches will be evident, how they provide historians with different possibilities, how and to what extent these methods can assist our understanding of historical developments, and how different pictures may result from applying these approaches.

Various interpretations, different evaluations, the efforts of creating them, and the use of multiple points of view, and entry, result in alternative endings (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 24, 25) or research outcomes. In this respect, Judge Pillay made the following points:

Founded on a negotiated political settlement, the Constitution anticipates that a culture and consciousness of co-operation and dialogue would evolve organically [...] [that] through dialogical, transformative constitutionalism [...] sharpen debate for outcomes, and [...] constructive discourse [...] This [...] constitutional culture that democracy-seekers collectively and consciously strive for...' is certainly at odds with views that would regard opposition parties as of the ANC as undermining dialogue.

This is an important point, because Graham (2014: 5, 3) reminds readers that:

...[t]here was no revolutionary overthrow of apartheid nor, following the transition process, was there a radical socialist-inspired transformation of South African society' [...] '[T]he ANC has willfully ignored the historical record.

Because of this, and referring to Ginzburg, Szijártó (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 22) maintains that '...the value of micro-history [...] rests mainly in its subversive capacity' – subversive because it unravels traditional thinking. When Judge Pillay dealt with the 'Legal principles' of this case, she made it clear that '[t]he test for defamation is whether, in the opinion of a reasonable person, the words have the tendency to undermine, subvert, or impair a person's good name, reputation, or esteem in the community' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [7]).

This is not the place to get into a discussion about Szijártó's (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 9) useful differentiation between Italian or *microstoria*; German or *Alltagsgeschichte*; Anglo-Saxon Micro-history (applying a looser definition of Micro-history to simply concentrate on the story itself); French (studies of anthropology and history of *mentalité*), Russian (with emphasis on the relationship

between the oppressive state and the individual), Hungarian, Scandinavian (with emphasis on theoretical contributions to Micro-history) or *quasi-microstoria*, about which, Magnússon (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 148), said: ‘Scholars’ methods also vary somewhat from one country to another.’ Nevertheless, ‘[c]ommon to all microhistorians [...] is that they uphold the importance of contextualization – placing the small unit of study in a broader context’ (Magnússon in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 148). The importance of context in this study cannot be overstated and absolving context cannot be supported.

Although it has become commonplace to define Micro-history along the lines of Ginzburg (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 4), one can consider Micro-history to be:

An intensive historical investigation of a relatively well-defined smaller object, most often a single person, event, small group of people, a small community, an idea or process/es.

Following this definition, Micro-history paints ‘a completely different picture of the past from the investigations about nations, states, or social groupings, stretching over decades, centuries, or whatever *longue durée*’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 5) is in place. This is because micro-historians generally focus on the *small units* of analysis and seemingly only *short time-periods*. Although ‘small’ and ‘short’ are also relative terms in their own rights, Dale Tomich (2011: 52–65) investigated historical time, *longue durée*, and Micro-history in detail. For the purposes here, *longue durée* serves as a ‘concept of historical inquiry and its deployment as a practical tool for constructing historical inquiry’ (Tomich 2011: 53).

Szijártó (2003: 209) for example, advanced four reasons why Micro-history is of relevance: it is appealing to the public; is realistic; it conveys personal experience; and the lines branching out from this reach very far. These four advantages are relevant to the Zuma case.

One such important theoretical issue, is that of ‘singularization’: ‘a way of thinking [that] seeks to deepen the particular qualities of observed singularities...’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 22). The concepts ‘thinking’, ‘understanding the particular qualities’ and ‘observed singularities’, are all context-bound. Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [10]; 6 [12]; 7 [15]; 8 [21]; 9: [23]; 9–12: [28–36]; 13 [41]) agreed that context is important. Her reference that ‘[t]he issue boils down to *interpreting Mr Zuma’s tweet in the political context* in which he published it’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6 [13]. Emphasis added), could not have been clearer.

But, according to Szijártó (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 9), Magnússon as ‘an advocacy of “the singularization of history” urged historians not to be influenced by grand narratives...’. In addition, Magnússon’s different approach to Micro-history

does not share the view that despite its micro-historical level subject matter, microhistory has a goal situated on the level of the general. He argues that the strength of microhistory lies in its capacity to break with metanarratives. He advocates a view of microhistory that should side with postmodernism, and that breaks with most traditions of social history. Instead of efforts to reach general conclusion, he suggest a “singularization of history”; “to analyse the interlinking of *events*, *narratives*, *analysis*, and *new events*” through the research model which he calls “textual environment” (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 10).

Magnússon (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 115) also explains that his own approach to ‘singularization’ is based on the experience and methods of fellow micro-historians. He approaches the past against the background of new poststructuralist perspectives in order to address the criticisms directed at contemporary history.

For Magnússon (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 115–116) the guiding principle is that historians must acknowledge and accept that they only ‘work with fragments, and lacunae, with revelations and secrets.’ To un-complicate matters, Magnússon raises the following problems: the investigator can only know a small part of the story through sources; by their very nature sources reveal only a part of the story and it is not advisable to incorporate micro-historical research into larger social or cultural schemes with grand meta-narratives because such contextualizations can ‘engulf’ them. This is because

[t]he grand narrative, whether masquerading under the name of modernization, the Enlightenment, Christianity, socialism or whatever, determines the questions that research is expected to ask, the form of the main argumentation and the positioning of the research within the world of academic study.

But one must be careful not to re-invent the wheel. After all, EH Carr (1974: 16) reminded us as far back as the early 1960s, that

[n]o document can tell us more than what the author of the document thought – what he thought had happened, what he thought out to happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even what he himself thought he thought.

This relative partiality or inherent incompleteness of historical accounts are central to historicism. It remains an unresolved limitation of historical *praxis* from the days when pen was first put to paper. In understanding the ‘long-now’, Jones (2017: 321) conceded that ‘[d]espite their seductiveness [her]

historic resources [...] are not perfect mirrors on the past' but that they only 'offer glimpses rather than complete views, are inherently partial, particular and idiosyncratic, with many gaps and silences as there are utterings' (Jones 2017: 8). But Judge Pillay appears to be more fortunate. She wrote: 'Neither the facts nor the legal principles [in this case] are in dispute' but for '...inaccuracies, reference to Constitutional Law and history will do. For others, the rules of evidence to determine probabilities will apply' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [11]; 17 [55]).

Magnússon (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 122–123; 135) on the other hand, stated his 'utter rejection of the importance of the grand narrative' despite the fact the singularization of history is '...a means of bringing out the contradictions that exist between the different "discourses" of individual groups'. Such is a precondition for revealing different ideas and points of view that would normally not have been clarified. In this manner, singularization of history reveals 'proper subjects in their proper logical and cultural context' without being subjected to ideological meta-narratives. In fact, 'I urge microhistorians to ignore the grand narrative as far as possible...', Magnússon wrote (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 158), because

microhistorians have, in the end, proved to have little influence within the discipline of history. [...] [t]his is precisely because they have been too concerned with the "great historical questions", or what I term the "grand narrative" (Magnússon in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 158).

When Judge Pillay placed Zuma's single tweet in its proper logical and socio-political context, it removed ideological meta-narratives from the testimony.

In this study however, ample supporting dialogue shows that the singular and the micro-macro link to 'Big Questions' and context, are necessary conditions for balanced historical reflection. The reason why Magnússon argues in this manner, is because he avoids the potentially predetermined influence of metanarratives of questions that are brought upfront to the research process and to avoid predetermined answers or research outcomes. Whilst one can understand Magnússon's concerns, one cannot imagine any writer or researcher being envisioned without having at least an idea or question (or a few) that he/she does not have in mind in what prompted him/her in the first place to have undertaken the particular research project.

Whilst it seems logical to link the micro-historical subject to general history, having a singular focus, in this case the tweet, that might clash with the varied past of general ANC history that is portrayed by traditional ANC narrative or general history, seems nothing unusual. For research attempts to find a way out from different content, but still keeping to some-old methods and aims, will not do, since it again ends up back with meta-narrative and general history (Magnússon 2003: 2–4). A suggested way out is to realize that '...metanarratives, whether going under the name of modernization theory or anything else, are "constructs" which have reference only to traditions of research' (Magnússon 2003:

17). But they are ‘constructs themselves’ with predetermined research inputs that influence the original research outputs. Instead, the concept of ‘singularization in history’ looks past the distortions of general history and studies all aspects in close detail, unveiling ‘contradictions [and], inconsistencies...’ (Magnússon 2003: 20) and nuances. Magnússon (2003: 20) also wrote that ‘...I would urge scholars to turn away from the metanarratives and their stifling presence within the traditional research community’. These are important considerations that Judge Pillay had to keep in mind.

The application of Carlo Ginzburg’s evidential paradigm in Micro-history advocates ‘analyzing similarly characteristic little signs’ [...] ‘Their similarity is based [...] to approach a directly inaccessible reality through analyzing small clues’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 21). Through conjecture that makes use of ‘its individualizing strategy and indirect knowledge’, history becomes accessible in meaningful ways (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 22). This allows deeper thinking that employs proof, rules and case because the synthesis that arrives at the micro-historian’s reduced sale for investigation, does not have to lead to relativism, fiction, myth or PT because it is context-bound, stems from experience and ‘a big historical question’ or meta-narrative. In this regard, Alexis D’Hautcourt (2019: 237) argues that the micro-macro link to ‘great historical question/s’ helps ‘...to break away from social conventions and self-imposed limitations.’ The self-imposed limitations of belief, for instance, instead of Zuma providing evidence, limits his case because it excludes its larger context from his testimony.

Since context cannot be separated from human experience or conversely, human experience is not independent from context, contextualization is the process ‘...of placing [in the case of micro-history] the smaller research unit in a broader context’ (Magnússon in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 113). Magnússon makes this point as follows:

...while a detailed document is needed for a micro-investigation, not even the richest sources make microhistory in themselves. [...] [H]istorians need the previous experience which has confronted them with hundreds of individual source documents’ in the *praxis* of historical pursuit (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 65).

Because context always belongs simultaneously to time and space, it sets ‘...the spatial limits of their investigation on the basis of an initial micro-analysis...’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 73). This is more than presenting the atypical, but applying its small contextualization endeavors to present a general picture. It is achieved through ‘...signifying signs into and intelligible structure and interpreting them with the help of a context’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 19).

But not everyone agrees with this. Magnússon (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 115) formulated his view in the following manner:

I see it as a major mistake on the part of the majority of microhistorians, and in fact of most social and cultural historians, to put the main emphasis on seeking ways to incorporate their own research units within greater wholes (contextualization).

Magnússon (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 115) summarizes this inherent problem as: ‘...unfortunately it seems to me that the demand for contextualization overwhelms the emphasis on the importance of the unit of study.’ Magnússon’s view (in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 148) is also that

[c]ommon to all microhistorians, however, is that they uphold the importance of contextualization – placing the small unit of study in a broader context – *inter alia* as a response to criticisms of the narrow perspective of their studies. Without this, microhistorical studies are deemed to have little meaning – they are dismissed as insignificant in comparison with “real” (empirical) scholarship. I have opposed this view, and [...] I reject it utterly.

The point of entry for this article is Zuma’s defamatory and false statement posted as a tweet of 25 July 2019 that made Derek Hanekom out to be a known enemy agent (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2). Zuma responded to the tweets of Julius Malema published on 23 July 2019 in which he claimed that they received from Hanekom a list of ANC MPs who were going to vote with the EFF in an upcoming vote of no confidence against Jacob Zuma (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [3]).

According to Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [10]), the *context* of Zuma’s tweet is

...relevant for evaluating the requirements [of] defamation. When the context is political, a higher tolerance for robustness and rhetoric applies than in cases which do not implicate the public interest of the political.

This tweet’s *context* clearly falls in the political realm. The point is that it was Zuma who placed the tweet in the public domain, meaning the ‘larger context’, but then at the same time wanted the litigation to be limited to:

...a larger conflict [that] casts a longer shadow beyond the legal and into the *political*. The ANC, through its highest decision-making structure, its NEC, resolved to recall Mr Zuma as President. Mr Hanekom actively supported that decision Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [28]. *Emphasis added*)

Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [36]. *Emphasis added*) also explained:

This litigation is a battle or skirmish in the overall war of dominance and control of the ANC by one or other faction. The conflict is intractable *political* contestation for which a *legal* resolution is sought. Interest in its outcome ramifies beyond the litigants and into the public domain. This is the *context* in which the defamation claim serves before the court (emphasis added).

This tweet of Zuma going into the public domain caused *wedges* being driven between the legal and civilian every-day life and the ‘...battle or skirmish in the overall war for dominance and control of the ANC by one or other faction’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [36]). There is clear cause for this.

First, ‘Mr Hanekom submits that the tweet, expressly or by implication, characterizes him as a “known enemy agent”, and that he is an apartheid spy in the *context* of Mr Zuma’s evidence at the Commission’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7: [15]. Emphasis added). Not only did Zuma admitted that his tweet was posted in the *context* of his evidence given before the Zondo Commission, but according to Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [21]. Emphasis added), Zuma also said that Hanekom was a known enemy agent, in the following *context*:

Hanekom, a member of the ANC had worked with the EFF, an avid opposition political party that had ceaselessly campaigned to discredit the ANC and its President. This conduct of Hanekom – working with the enemies of the ANC to weaken it politically and ultimately cause its removal from power fits well within the pillars of the intelligence plan I spoke about at the Zondo Commission. More importantly, his conduct fits the definition of enemy agent.

Judge Pillay repeated the importance of context – lawyers do it all the time – that this case is about

the “natural” or “ordinary” meaning of Mr Zuma’s tweet in the *context*, [and the test is] ‘Would a notional reasonable right-thinking reader with normal intelligence understands Mr Zuma’s tweet to mean that Mr Hanekom is an apartheid era spy acting against the ANC? (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6 [12]).

The Judge then wrote (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [36]. Emphasis added) that ‘[m]indfulness of this *context* facilitates the court’s intervention...’ because ‘[i]n the *context* it means that Mr Hanekom acted on behalf of the enemy...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [41]. Emphasis added).

It is within this *context* that Zuma tweeted the ‘defamatory and false’ statement that is based on his conspiracy story of a ‘...plan which allegedly started more than 20 years ago [that] persist today in the ANC and its NEC through Hanekom’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [51]). Instead, Judge Pillay

‘...find on objective evidence in this application that it is Mr Zuma who propagates a false narrative about Mr Hanekom...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]). [...] False narratives about Southern African history cannot be left unchecked’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]).

In the context of this tweet, it is not a dispute about whether Hanekom is an apartheid spy or not, ‘[n]or does it call for a value, moral or political judgement... [but rather, that] legal principles must apply’ [...] about the “natural” and “ordinary” meaning of Zuma’s tweet...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6 [12]). This means that the essence of this case must to be stated along its most essential characteristics. These characteristics one finds in the essence of this case.

4. What is this litigation essentially about?

Under the heading ‘The issues’, Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [11]) reduced the essence of the issues in this litigation to the following three: firstly, that in this case ‘neither the facts nor the legal principles are in dispute’ [...] and ‘if I find that Mr Zuma’s tweet implies that Mr Hanekom is an apartheid spy [...] then the application must succeed’ [...] because ‘[w]rongfulness is not only presumed but also conceded.’ Secondly, ‘what the case is about is the “natural” or “ordinary” meaning of Zuma’s tweet in the context’, and lastly, ‘the issue boils down to interpreting Mr Zuma’s tweet in the political context in which he published it’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5–6 [11–13]).

In presiding over this case, she then made the following points against the background of more detail for further consideration: ‘[w]ould a notional reasonable right-thinking reader with normal intelligence understand Mr Zuma’s tweet to mean that Mr Hanekom is an apartheid era spy acting against the ANC?’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6 [12]).

Also, according to Judge Pillay, ‘[t]his litigation is a proxy for the internal conflict within the ANC’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 10 [29]). She maintains that ‘[t]his litigation is a battle or skirmish in the overall war for dominance and control of the ANC by one or other faction’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [36]). Zuma confirmed this in his own words. Thirdly, ‘[t]he conflict is intractable political contestation for which a legal resolution is sought’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [36]). Both litigants seek a legal outcome.

This litigation not only reaches *back* into history, but also into the *future* because ‘[t]his application is to interdict Mr Zuma from making false statement about Mr Hanekom’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [83]) – meaning future statements. Lastly, when reduced to a binary, ‘...the issue is a determination of fact or inferences from facts’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5: [11]).

One can argue in Gramscian tradition, how ‘historical materialism and hegemonic blocs’ (Corry and Stevenson 2017: 10) are concerned with different ideological and strategic forms of power relations

that continuously shape ANC-factionalism for domination of the party and the state. Consequently, this case shows that:

- ‘a larger conflict casts a longer shadow beyond the legal and into the political’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [28])
- unity in the ANC is myth: there exists the faction who is ‘opposed to the wishes and objectives of the ANC’, and another faction namely, ‘those who deployed him [Zuma’s] as Head of State’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 10 [28])
- ‘the courts will solve the dispute; but it would take much more to resolve the conflict’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [36])
- Hanekom and Zuma find ‘themselves on opposite sides of each other [...] in the ANC’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 10 [28])
- ‘internal organizational remedies for dialogue is over’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [33])
- Zuma had an opportunity but choose not to resolve the matter prior to the commencement of this litigation (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [33]; [34])
- ‘mutual distrust has broken down the relationship irretrievably’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [34])
- ‘Zuma wanted his tweet to remain’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [34])
- ‘both were prepared for lawfare’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [34])
- ‘lawfare is a consequence of the failure of dialogue and politics (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [35])
- ‘it is good for litigation to factor in politics to advance constitutionalism’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [35])
- ‘escalating lawfare reflective of institutional dysfunctionality, social discord and ailing politics will, over time, constrain the capacity of litigation to remedy disorder efficiently’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [35])
- ‘The tweet is political speech that must be protected as such’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [40]).

From the above, one can also list the following ‘bad’ things that are (were) happening to Zuma, as he claims:

- There is a list of ANC MPs who are going to vote with the EFF in the vote of no confidence against Zuma (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [3])
 - ‘Hanekom plotted with the EFF to bring down President Zuma. The same goes for Solly Mapaila (Deputy General Secretary of the SACP) too’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [3])
-

- Hanekom seeks an interdict in order to “muzzle” him from testifying any further against Zuma at the Commission’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [3])
 - It is ‘Mr Hanekom “who deliberately and mischievously” [...] [added] “apartheid spy” to his reference’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [20])
 - Although a member of the ANC, Hanekom ‘had worked with the EFF’ [and] with the enemies of the ANC to weaken it politically and ultimately cause its removal from power fits well within the pillars of the intelligence plan that I [Zuma] spoke about at the Zondo Commission’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [21])
 - Zuma said there exists ‘an intelligence plan’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22])
 - ‘specifically created to ensure that the ANC is ultimately hijacked (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22])
 - ‘by a person who had worked for the intelligence organizations to fight against the ANC’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22])
 - The ANC was to be ‘weakened and controlled by the interests represented by those intelligence organizations’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22])
 - ‘There are people who do their work purporting to advance a good agenda but in truth being part and parcel of the plan’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22])
 - ‘The Commission is his “graveyard” in which his enemies intended to bury him with “lies and character assassination”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22])
 - There are ‘those who deliberately sought to assassinate Mr Zuma’s character’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [23])
 - To ‘discredit his political role both in the ANC and the country’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [23])
 - Hanekom supports the ANC’s enemies ‘and those of Mr Zuma’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [23])
 - Hanekom could use his ANC membership to bolster the strategies of political enemies of the ANC against the ANC (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [25])
 - Hanekom is disloyal to the ANC (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [25])
 - Hanekom misconstrued his tweet (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [26])
 - Hanekom had a grand plan (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [26])
 - This would limit Zuma’s ‘right to share his political opinions about the actions of persons in the ANC “who betray its historical mission”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [26])
 - Hanekom ““worked with the enemies of the ANC to topple it and undermine its leadership [...] and undermine the unity of the ANC”” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 10 [30])
 - Hanekom ‘staged his exile in Zimbabwe’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [31])
 - Hanekom’s constant reference to him as “a liar” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [32])
-

- ‘it is people like Mr Hanekom who seek to suppress alternative views and facts by rubbishing who may expose ... “liars” or enablers of State capture’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [32])
- ‘they seek to conceal the true nature of state capture they have perpetrated since South Africa’s political settlement in 1994’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [32])
- ‘Mr Hanekom has “connived and colluded with the enemies and opposition parties that sought to remove him as president of the Republic of South Africa”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 12 [37]).

It is said that if a story is repeated often enough it is most likely to gain traction. Repetition and duration in storytelling are flipsides of the same coin to convince an audience to believe the story and are two key ingredients for its longevity – stop telling a story, and it fades from memory. This is the same with peddling conspiracy narratives – a favorite genre with Zuma (and the ANC). He believes so strongly in his own story, that he was prepared to testify about it at the Zondo Commission – this testimony turned against him. In fact, according to Judge Pillay, ‘[t]his is the connection that Mr Zuma wants readers [of his tweet] to make’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [45]). And it is for this reason, that, because the ‘litigants make many accusations and counteraccusations against each other’ [...], that it ‘requires some analysis of a few material inconsistencies, misconceptions and distortions’, that they cannot be ‘[l]eft unchecked’ or otherwise, that they ‘could be peddled as truths...’ The research by Graham, for instance, supports this view.

Zuma claims to first have ‘met Hanekom in 1988 in his staged exile in Zimbabwe’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [31]. Emphasis in original) some ten years *after* Hanekom contacted the ANC in Botswana in 1979. Hanekom’s contact was Mr Roland Hunter, who at the time, was the personal assistant of Colonel Cornelius van Niekerk of the South African Defence Force. Col van Niekerk was head of covert “Operation Mila” ‘with the sole aim of destabilising the Frelimo government of Mozambique. Hanekom’s facilitation negotiations resulted in the Nkomati accord that pushed back the movement back to its fundamental “rear base” – to the people of South Africa. This escalated the struggle and hastened the demise of the apartheid government (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [72]; [73]; [74]).

Judge Pillay then made the following devastating point:

In these circumstances, for Mr Zuma to dismiss Mr Hanekom’s anti-apartheid activism, his loyalty to the ANC and his underground work as irrelevant to his application is not only offensive and inflammatory but also disingenuous. Mr Hanekom’s anti-apartheid activities are building blocks constitutive of his reputation and his identity. Hence this claim for defamation. Despite being the head of intelligence and “fully aware” of

intelligence operations, Mr Zuma offers not a shred of evidence to support his claim that Mr Hanekom was an apartheid era spy. *False narratives about Southern African history cannot be left unchecked* (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]. Emphasis added).

Zuma repeated in the tweet what he said at the Zondo Commission, namely, that “[i]t is part of the plan I mentioned at the Zondo Commission” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 14 (49)). As a former ANC intelligence chief, Zuma testified at the Commission that ‘he knew about the work of three foreign intelligence agencies and apartheid spies who had infiltrated the ANC. He named two senior members of the ANC as apartheid spies. He has not named Mr Hanekom – yet’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 14–15 [50]). One superficial explanation for this is that ‘...he’d rather not say who, so as not to harm the party’, Basson and Du Toit (2017: 73) wrote.

Zuma also testified (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [50]) about three intelligence organizations who met to discuss with him their plan that began in 1990 as a process of his character assassination. Two of these organizations were from two different big countries and the third came from inside South Africa from under the apartheid structures. Together they were part of a conspiracy and he claimed to have information about this. It is not clear when he will eventually use that information against the actors in order to stop this process of character assassination, or when he will substantiate his testimony with evidence. These organizations decided to remove Zuma from the ANC’s decision-making structures. This, he testified, is the reason why their character assassination started a long time ago – to remove him from the ANC’s decision-making structures. Zuma said: ‘I am saying this because there has been a process and particularly against Jacob Zuma a conspiracy [...] I am told by other organisations that my organization as well as in the NEC there are people who are working for them whom *they want to be in control of this country*’ (emphasis added). Treating the Hanekom case as a ‘security issue’ is consistent with an air of secrecy that surrounds the ANC. Jeremy Gordin (2009: 303) for instance, cited Padriac O’Malley, Mac Maharaj’s biographer, who took up the issue of the ANC ‘...that did not always act against known spies, at least ones who were senior’, to which Zuma answered: “‘That’s not the way we operated.’” This is consistent with ‘...what was going on inside the ANC’s leadership circles during Codesa and following the election victory of 1994 was kept under wraps, and much of it wasn’t particularly loving’ (Gordin 2009: 63).

Although this knowledge that Zuma claims, was kept as ‘an intelligence issue’: it was important to say (or reveal) this because he has been facing this character assassination for more than 20 years. He also claims to know ‘one of the clear sources’ [...] ‘there was a plan to deal with Zuma and Zuma has been dealt with all the time.’ One can argue that Zuma sees himself as a victim of all the ‘bad’ things that happened and continue to happen to him.

In summary, Zuma’s story goes that under apartheid, from 1990 onwards, two foreign intelligence agencies and the local one, for a number of reasons, ‘thought it was important to deal with this man

[Zuma]’. This means that the narrative for Zuma to resign and leave the leadership, ‘started way back, as part of this plan.’ From Zuma’s explanation it appears that the plan was conceived late 1989 or early 1990 for it ‘to begin in 1990’. This is of course if Zuma’s chronology is correct, because this is about only two years after he met Hanekom for the first time ‘...in 1988 in his staged exile Zimbabwe’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [31]. Emphasis in original). In addition, according to Zuma, this narrative ‘persists today in the ANC and its NEC through Hanekom’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [51]). ‘The Commission’, he claims. ‘was his “graveyard”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22]).

5. What is Zuma’s *modus operandi*?

The best, and to borrow from Magnússen the term ‘textual environment’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 10), is to apply textual environment as a starting point to answer the above question in Judge Pillay’s following finding:

I find on objective evidence in this application, that *it is Mr Zuma who propagates a false narrative about Mr Hanekom and his underground activities for the ANC* (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 25 [80]. Emphasis added).

Zuma’s false narrative has turned against him. This means that the well-published, intensely debated and widely demonstrated civil discontent against the state capture narrative amongst South Africans, suggests that it places Zuma more than just in the middle thereof. So, what is the *modus operandi* of Zuma?

Firstly (and without numbering them sequentially), Zuma *changed this grand narrative* and blamed it on Hanekom and ‘people like him’ for his own questionable misfortunes. The art of blaming, is of course, generally, seen as ‘the easy way out.’ He then actively propagated this false narrative. In fact, he changed the narrative to the following:

...it is people like Mr Hanekom who seek “to suppress alternative views and facts by rubbishing those who may expose...liars or enablers of State capture when in fact it is they who seek to conceal the true nature of State capture they have perpetrated since South Africa’s political settlement in 1994” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [32]. Emphasis in original).

When Zuma implicates ‘people like Mr Hanekom’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [32]), *he draws other people into the fray*: from opposition parties, people from within the ANC, and people from conspiring organizations outside and within the country. Zuma then also names Mr Solly Mapaila

(Deputy General Secretary of the SACP) (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [3]) to be conspiring. According to Zuma it is therefore clear that the SACP is by implication also a conspiring organization.

Changing the grand narrative as Zuma did, created another problem for him. According to Judge Pillay: ‘He *distorts objective historical facts*’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]. Emphasis added) of, for instance, Hanekom’s underground work.

Zuma *believes* in his own false narrative even if this belief is ‘erroneously’ false (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [69]). In fact, he ‘repeats this belief several times’ and he is ‘[s]o emphatic’ about it that he *denies* that it is false (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 17 [56]). But, unfortunately for Zuma, the Judge said the following about his beliefs: ‘However, Mr Zuma’s *beliefs* are not evidence. They cannot acquire the stamp of legitimacy...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 23 [79]. Emphasis added). In other words, Zuma, as President (at the time), was prepared to work *beyond* the realms of *legitimacy*: ‘...Zuma’s *publication of his tweet was and continues to be unlawful*’, the Judge ordered (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2. Emphasis added).

The issue of *impermissibility* is closely related to the above. According to the Judge, ‘[F]or Zuma to testify in his application that Mr Hanekom “staged” his exile without putting up any facts to support this testimony, is impermissible’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 23 [77]). By saying what he did, requires from Zuma substantiation. If he wants to make claims, e.g. ‘...that Hanekom is a known enemy agent’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2), or that ‘...Hanekom seeks an interdict in order to “muzzle” him’ from testifying at the Zondo Commission (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [4]), then the obligation is on Zuma to substantiate these claims, and ‘[i]f he cannot substantiate his claims, he should not make them’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 23 [77]). Fortunately for Zuma, he need not worry about being ‘muzzled’ because Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2) also ruled as follows:

The interdict [...] *does not bar the respondent* from testifying fully, as he is required to, at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector Including Organs of State (Emphasis added).

After all, Zuma always wanted his day in court and in the above ruling, none of his Constitutional rights were compromised, instead, they were reaffirmed.

But Zuma *does not want to substantiate his claims* and *he does not want to prove them either*. Zuma’s stance ‘is not to *prove* that Mr Hanekom is an apartheid spy...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4 [4]. Emphasis added), said the Judge. Rather, Zuma uses a conspiracy theory for his claims. He builds this narrative to a level where he wants his audience to believe it, but at the same time *offers no evidence* for those claims. For instance, ‘Mr Zuma offers no evidence to support his tweet that Mr Hanekom is an agent of the EFF’, and again, ‘I find no evidence to support Mr Zuma’s claim that Mr Hanekom is either an enemy of the ANC or an agent for the EFF or opposition parties’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019:

14: [47]). Furthermore, he gave ‘no evidence that the people of South Africa were opposed to his recall’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [69]; 24 [80]). These render Zuma’s claims baseless.

Eventually, when he did put forward a defense, it was ‘internally *inconsistent* in multiple ways’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 20 [64]. Emphasis added). Admitting that he called Hanekom ‘a known enemy agent’ or an ‘apartheid spy’ is defamatory’, but for Zuma then to deny ‘that his tweet “cast aspersions on the character and integrity of Hanekom”’ is an inconsistency. Furthermore, ‘[i]t is not only Mr Hanekom who supported his removal [...]’ and Zuma knows this. ‘Notwithstanding the efforts within the ANC since 2016 to recall him, Mr Zuma chose to resign only in February 2018 (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [70]). In addition, to admit calling Hanekom a known enemy but not an ‘apartheid spy’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 23 [76]) is also inconsistent. Lastly, [d]espite being the head of intelligence and “fully aware” of intelligence operations, *Mr Zuma offers not a shred of evidence to support his claim that Mr Hanekom was an apartheid era spy*’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]. Emphasis added).

In addition, Zuma treats a path to *undermine*. For example, ‘Zuma mistakenly assumes that loyalty to the ANC is synonymous with loyalty to him’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [69]). [...] Support for the removal of Mr Zuma as President of South Africa is not synonymous with undermining the ANC’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [70]. Emphasis added) as he claims. But, of course, he perpetuates this false narrative. This is clear from the following example: ‘There is an NEC decision that binds Mr Zuma, but he seeks to *undermine* it...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]. Emphasis added). Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [60]) is also of the following view: ‘To regard opposition parties as enemies of the ANC undermines dialogue’ [...] in a ‘...participatory, dialogical, developmental and constitutional [...] multi-party democracy.’

Zuma *exaggerates* things. He said it ‘has become *commonplace* for those in Hanekom’s place to suppress alternative views and facts...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]. Emphasis added). This is simply incorrect. That Hanekom allegedly voted with some ANC and opposition members for Zuma’s removal, demonstrates precisely that Hanekom does not suppress but rather practice ‘alternative views and facts’. Zuma’s exaggeration that the so-called ‘push-back’ narrative *against* the idea that state capture and facts regarding it, never took place, have not gained widespread traction in and from civil society, people in public, and from private sector claiming that state capture does not exist. To give only one example: revelations at the Zondo Commission reveal precisely the opposite – the existence and continued perpetuation of widespread state capture and widespread civil discontent about it, cannot be denied or be made undone. Civil society believes and is aware of the so-called pro-Zuma ‘push-back’ narrative as found by former Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, years ago. The Judge said: ‘Mr Zuma has no better evidence than Mr Hanekom’s admission about this role in having Mr Zuma recalled. [...] Mr Zuma exaggerates this role to conniving and colluding with opposition parties’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]. Because ‘[d]efamation is the wrongful and the intentional publication of defamatory

words or conduct pertaining to a claimant’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4: [6]), it complicates Zuma’s defense even further.

Defamation, whether said or implied ‘have the tendency to *undermine*, subvert, or impair a person’s good name, reputation, or esteem in the community’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [6]. Emphasis added). Against this background, ‘Mr Zuma’s tweet undermines Mr Hanekom’s legitimacy and authority as a senior and previously well-respected politician, as well as his legacy as an anti-apartheid activist’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [17]).

The *use of defamation* by Zuma has far-reaching consequences for Hanekom (as outlined above) but also for Zuma’s defense. Through this litigation Zuma further undermines, *subverts or impairs* his own name, reputation and esteem in the public perception. There is a specific logic in all of this: to name Hanekom a ‘known enemy agent’ is to make him out to be an apartheid era spy. If he is an apartheid era spy, as Zuma believes, it means that he did not conduct himself in a manner that is in the best interest of the ANC and the country (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [15]). He therefore, according to Zuma, “lacks integrity”, is “untrustworthy”, “lies”, and ‘deceives his comrades’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [15]). This results in Zuma entering the realm of making up an “entirely and demonstrably false” statement (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [15]). Hanekom’s reputation is then tarnished because ‘his colleagues and the public [...] perceive him as “untrustworthy” and “suspicious”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [17]). His integrity is compromised, and he is suspected of being an “askari” and “impimpi” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [18]). This, Hanekom contends, leads to ‘[t]hreats to harm him and his wife [that] put their personal safety at risk’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 3 [2]).

Zuma’s use of defamation *infringes* Hanekom’s ‘fundamental right to dignity’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [18]). Infringing on someone’s dignity, is to make that person *un-equal* before the law, amongst family, friends, peers and in the eyes of society. This is in contravention of the Constitution.

When Zuma *implied* that Hanekom is an apartheid spy or being dishonest, is ‘automatically defamatory’. Calling Hanekom a spy, *imputes* to Hanekom that he lacks “the qualities that are required to be entrusted with the confidences of high office”. This “would indeed tend to lower him in the estimation of the people straddling all sectors of our society” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [9]; [10]). Instead, Zuma *wants others to make the same connections* (links) as him.

Zuma’s statements (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2) may lead to future legal difficulties for him. The Judge ruled (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2) that Zuma’s ‘allegations [...] about the applicant [...] are defamatory and *false...*’ (emphasis added). Zuma was ordered to ‘unconditionally withdraw this allegation [...] for making it *as it is false*’ (emphasis added). Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [51]) also explains: ‘The plan which *allegedly* started more than 20 years ago persists today in the ANC and its NEC through Mr Hanekom.’ This is part of the Zuma-perpetuated false narrative. So, the allegations that Zuma claims to be “true” (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [23]) form part of his false narrative.

A large part of Zuma's case is embedded in *denial*. Of course, '[t]here are many kinds of denialism' Jeremy Cronin reminded us (Basson and du Toit 2017: 10). This is no surprise since he is the respondent. In the first place, 'Mr Zuma began his defense by repeatedly denying that "known enemy agent" implied "apartheid spy"' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [63]). Zuma also denied that he ever claimed that Hanekom was an apartheid spy (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 4: [4]. Emphasis added), but admits calling Hanekom a known *enemy*. He denied he "deliberately and mischievously" added the words "apartheid spy" to his "reference to him as an enemy agent" (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8: [20]). He also denied that he *testified* at the Zondo Commission 'that Mr Hanekom was an enemy agent' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 8 [22]).

The intricacies of the testimonies are as follows: '[a]s political actors they [Hanekom and Zuma] allow for some robustness in political speech' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [42]). 'They agree that historically, apartheid spies were referred to as enemy agents. And it is hurtful to be called an apartheid spy. This would render the tweet defamatory' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [42]). But according to Mr Zuma, his tweet does not refer to apartheid spy and is therefore not defamatory (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13: [42]) and regardless of this denial 'Mr Zuma describes "enemy agent" to be "a member who works with its enemies to weaken it"' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13: [43]). This is important because '[h]istorically, it referred to apartheid spies' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [44]). Lastly, this is for Zuma, merely "a matter of perspective or choice of words"' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [43]). It shows a logical and intellectual intolerance: from Zuma who objected if his testimony was negated, to a mere 'choice of words'.

As a result, Zuma does not want to refer to 'apartheid spy', but '[t]his is the *connection* that Mr Zuma want readers to make' hence he purposefully leaves the 'innuendo or ambiguity' unresolved (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [43]. Emphasis added). In other words, Zuma uses 'insinuations, inuendo, and ambiguity' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 17 [54]; 24 [80]) as a manner of operating. This materially undermined his defense.

In Zuma's view (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [24]) '...Mr Hanekom's role in the liberation struggle, it does not mean that he did not act "against the interests of the ANC...'. This abruptness is tantamount to undermining dialogue. Zuma denies that his tweet is defamatory. Why? Because 'his tweet does not refer to *apartheid* spy and is therefore not defamatory' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13 [42]. Emphasis added), but Zuma forgets the most important issue in this litigation, namely, context, when it suits him. The context is clear: '...one of the structures *under apartheid* [...] was part of this conspiracy' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [50]. Emphasis added) – *apartheid* being the socio-political context. Zuma also 'denies that Mr Hanekom has been a loyal and disciplined member of the ANC for most part of his adult life...' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 16 [53]). Zuma 'denies that his tweet "cast aspersions on the character and integrity of Hanekom"' (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 20 [64]). The problem is therefore the following for Zuma: you cannot believe and say that Hanekom is disloyal and undisciplined and thinks

it does not ‘cast aspersions on the character and integrity of Hanekom’ at the same time. These are not mutually exclusive.

When Zuma *impugns* Hanekom’s discipline and loyalty in relation to the ANC, he leaves himself open to the same criticism that he levels against Hanekom. It is seemingly ‘unmindful that his own resistance to being recalled [...] opens him to the same accusation that he levels against Mr Hanekom’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [71]) without realizing the contradictions thereof (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [63]).

Following from his denials, Zuma *dismisses* for instance, ‘...Hanekom’s struggle credentials with: “It is true that I first met Hanekom in 1988 in his staged exile in Zimbabwe”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [32]. Emphasis in original). In doing so, Zuma treats Hanekom’s struggle credentials as unworthy of any further conversation or acknowledgement. According to Judge Pillay: ‘[T]o dismiss Mr Hanekom’s anti- apartheid activism, his loyalty to the ANC and his underground work as irrelevant to this application is not only offensive and inflammatory but also disingenuous’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]). With regards to his denials, Zuma did the same when he ‘describes “enemy agent” to be “a member who works with its enemies to weaken it.”’ He knows well that ‘[h]istorically, it referred to apartheid spies’ but ‘he dismisses it as is merely “a matter of perspective of choice of words”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 13: [43]). Zuma chose not to give the deserved credit to the full struggle credentials of Hanekom by simply selectively leaving the rest of the credential out or ignores them. After all, Zuma’s ‘right to freedom of expression under s 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1966’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [6]) remains intact. In other words, he has nothing to fear should he make full disclosures. This means that if Zuma wants to be, or chose to be offensive, inflammatory and disingenuous, he does so at his own discretion. The ‘Order’ against Zuma confirms this.

Following from the above, everything in life is about choices. Zuma *made* a few *fateful choices*. For example, before Hanekom launched his application, he issued a demand for relief on 29 July 2019. Although Zuma’s attorneys acknowledged receipt thereof the following day, Zuma ‘did not respond to clarify his tweet’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [33]). According to Judge Pillay:

Mr Zuma had a choice. He could have clarified his tweet to say, as he now does in his answering affidavit, that he was not suggesting that Mr Hanekom is an apartheid spy. Mr Zuma chose not to respond to the demand. It follows that Mr Zuma wanted his tweet to remain on his Twitter account. He too wants a litigated outcome (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [34]).

There is a sense of deliberateness in his decisions to entice confrontation because he wanted a litigated outcome.

Despite efforts in the NEC since 2016 to recall Zuma, he ‘chose to resign only in February 2018’ and also chose not to ‘challenge the NEC decision’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [70]). This means that by resigning ‘...he acquiesced in the NEC decision’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [20]) which he subsequently never took on review. But more profoundly, having resigned meant giving in to ‘imperialist forces’ (that were not there in the first place, unless of course, he provides proof), and secondly, resigning meant ‘pleasing the enemy’. Zuma was wrong about the first but right about the second.

As in the above instance, *Zuma* sometimes *does not explain* himself. Judge Pillay summarizes this point as follows:

It does not explain why he, Mr Zuma, would knowingly appoint a person whom he believed to be an apartheid spy to senior positions within the ANC and the government. To add that such a person would never assume the position of President of the ANC is no explanation for enabling an apartheid spy to hold high political office in democratic South Africa (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 23 [78]).

Zuma speculates. According to Judge Pillay, ‘Mr Zuma maintains that Mr Hanekom did work ““with the political enemies of the ANC when it was convenient for him. [...] he could use his ANC membership to bolster the strategies of political enemies [...] [and] he could work against his own political party to sure that it was weakened and finally removed from power”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [25]). This, Zuma ‘advances as “true” [...] ‘as the objective and uncontested facts...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 9 [25]). Eventually the Judge ruled against Zuma.

Judge Pillay made it clear that as a legal principle, ‘*neither the meaning which the maker of the statement intended to convey, nor the meaning given to it by the persons to whom it was published, matters*’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5 [8]. Emphasis added) because the objective test stands.

Similarly, *value, moral, and political judgements do not apply*, instead, ‘legal principles must apply’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 6 [13]). Zuma’s assumptions as if ‘loyalty to the ANC is synonymous with loyalty to him’ is both ‘factually and constitutionally untenable’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 21 [69]).

When Zuma *claimed* that his *statement* against Hanekom *was justified* (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 10 [29]), it falls into the realm of value statements and renders itself irrelevant. Of relevance and importance is Judge Pillay’s reference to ‘[t]he litigants [who] finger each other as wedge-drivers’, a concept that ‘the ANC adopted...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]) needs brief discussion. According to Zuma he first met Hanekom in 1988 in Zimbabwe (about ten years after Hanekom contacted the ANC in Botswana). Eventually Zuma appointed Hanekom to his Cabinet knowing, at the time about Hanekom being an enemy agent, yet did nothing about it, then claiming it was ‘kept [...] as and intelligence issue...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [50]). Zuma did not attempt to explain of what

benefit such intelligence strategy could have been for any interested party. This twenty-year old plan and conspiracy that ‘persists today in the ANC and its NEC though Hanekom (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 15 [51]) drove a wedge between Zuma and Hanekom, between conspirators and non-conspirators, dividing civil society, and constitutionalists and non-constitutionalists. In Zuma’s view there is also the faction who is ‘opposed to the wishes and objectives of the ANC’, and ‘those who deployed him [Zuma’s] as Head of State’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 10 [28]).

For Zuma who ‘regards opposition parties as enemies of the ANC...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [60]) is to drive a wedge between those who are in favor of dialogue and those who are not. It drives a wedge that ‘is seriously at odds with our constitutional values’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [61]). When Zuma refers

...to anyone with whom one does not agree, politically, intellectually, ideologically, or in any other way, as enemy, sows the seeds for internecine political violence that bedevil many nations’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [60]).

This is no more than a wedge between peace and violence. Judge Pillay continues: ‘To link “enemy” to opposition parties would be the antithesis of all that we stand for as a peace-loving, multi-party democracy...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [60]). The wedge between such values and ‘...strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [61]), is obvious. Furthermore, ‘[t]he interdict [...] does not bar the respondent from testifying truthfully, as he is required to, at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2). There is no wedge driven between Zuma and his ‘...right to freedom of expression in s 16 of the Constitution’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 5–6 [11]) although he claims this. However, there is a wedge driven between ‘...Mr Zuma who propagates a false narrative about Mr Hanekom...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]), or ‘[f]alse narratives about Southern African history [that] cannot be left unchecked’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]) and ‘...failed politics and social discord’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11–12 [35]) on the one hand, and constitutionalism on the other. Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19 [61]) is of the view that Zuma ‘[a]s a member of the ANC “for decades”, having “different leadership responsibilities”, including as President, [...] [he] must know, support and actively advance dialogue and other bridge building practices to achieve the revolutionary aims of our Constitution.’

Zuma’s use of mass social media as communicative space deserves some attention. He wanted to tell a micro-story as fast as possible with a reach as wide as possible, automatically reaching about 323 000 followers, with 1 817 comments and 2 902 retweets, with this tweet. When Zuma ‘could have clarified his tweet [...] he chose not to respond [...] [i]t follows that Mr Zuma wanted his tweet to remain on his Twitter account’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 11 [34]) for maximum effect in propagating

a false narrative about Hanekom...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]). So, ‘[t]he issues ventilated in the public domain via social and other media are of public interest [...] [and] [t]hey call for judicial intervention...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 25 [87]). Both litigants got that.

According to Judge Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 25 [84]) ‘...*Mr Zuma refuses to apologise to Mr Hanekom...*’, and continues: ‘South Africa’s “negotiated revolution” heralded our Constitution in which we pledge to “[h]eal the divisions of the past...”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 18[57]), does nothing to remove wedges to ‘[h]eal the divisions of the past ... and [b]uild a united and democratic South Africa...’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 18 [57]). Emphasis added). Some would argue that to not apologize, marks the moment of (and to borrow the following concept from Thabo Mbeki) ‘the *death of dignity...*’ (Mbeki in Tambo 2014: 37. Emphasis in original) for Zuma.

6. A brief overview of PT

The ways in which Zuma operates, the manner in which he conducts himself, and the language associated with this trial, are less than complementary, as is PT *praxis*. It underpins aspects of ‘...contemporary disillusionment with post-apartheid democracy’ (Engelbrecht 2019d: 2). Alexander Parker and Tim Richman (2018: 65; 25; 24) recently argued that

...most of us are of the opinion that all politicians are truth manipulators of some or other ilk, guided by expediency and self-preservation [...] [a]nd Jacob Zuma managed to bring the most sophisticated economy on the continent, South Africa’s, to its knees by divvying up national assets among his patrons and cronies [...] ultimately motivated by the most craven needs for wealth and power.’ This, after he ‘became president because of a false narrative he and his supporter created... (Basson and Du Toit 2017: xii). [...]

The country’s law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system, from SARS to SAPS to the NPA, had been ravaged. A high-stakes political battle centred around [...] Zuma had been raging, and part of the project to protect him was the international, malicious hollowing out of the institutions that were meant to uphold the law’ (Wiener 2019: 4).

Zuma’s election to president, despite a false narrative, is consistent with earlier findings dating back to 2013 (Engelbrecht 2019c).

PT is generally juxtaposed to scientific method and inquiry. It defies fact and theory (Engelbrecht 2019a: 1; Engelbrecht 2019b), or the facts of the matter when it suits the circumstances or desired objectives. But, at the same time, PT *praxis* does not disregard facts altogether or in the same way as

Zuma. PT deals with facts and truth economically, selectively and inconsistently. When ideologically and ethically compromised, PT *praxis* calls on, and for, empirical truth. Thus, for some critics, all is not lost: ‘The fact that so many people are upset at Trump’s lies shows that we still value and recognize the truth’ (Goldhill 2018), or D Guy (2019) who commented after the ruling that there are still many calls for truth. Getting to the bottom, however, of truth, is becoming no easier. PT is fake truth. It does not seek to arrive at truth hence it cannot be.

Steve Fuller (2017) is of the view that Plato and the Sophists are generally considered PT thinkers, more concerned with the mix of chance than still being locked up in the traditional constriction of the truth or the contents thereof, rather than with truth itself. Jayson Harsin (2018) also locates the historical legacy of PT in the earliest forms of political persuasion, and questions of ethics and epistemology, which Plato raised in the *Gorias*.

Although Green (1995) and Besserman (1998) wrote about PT in the late-‘90s, it is generally regarded as an early-21st century phenomenon. It became trendy and popular during the period of the American presidential elections of 2016 and the June 2016 UK Brexit referendum. However, PT does not only operate in the realm of politics but is also present in commerce, marketing, archaeology, art, literature, or in scientific medical and pharmaceutical claims or insurance fine-print.

On the one hand, one finds so-called ‘popular truth’ – a weak form of knowledge that is embedded in the trust of those persons or organizations’ spokespeople who are supposedly to know the truth, as if they do, or pretends to know, exists. On the other hand, critical scholars work with more sophisticated complexes of historical factors than with popular truth propagators who are mainly ignorant or unaware of ‘real truth’, if such exists. Thus, PT is more than just semantics. It is not just a theoretical, philosophical or political approach to a periodizing concept, sometimes interpreted as a time ‘after’ or ‘beyond’ truth phenomenon. Instead, *PT is a way of living*. It exceeds the exceptional normal and fast becoming the norm for normal.

Modern origins of PT are prevalent in elite negotiation centers of mass representative liberal democracy, with its own *praxis* for organizing and deploying mass communication technologies. These elites are made up of pioneers in the influence or persuasion industries. They are often related to centers of monopoly capital accumulation e.g. government structures, funding centers, university research projects, NGOs, donor agencies or public relations businesses. Through these channels, the object of PT has become increasingly strategic in the processes and practices of emotion, attention, power and resource management.

Defining PT is challenging. Since there are a variety of *motives* for and *influences* on the person who wants to define PT, what might be acceptable in one set of circumstance for defining or accepting a definition, might not be in another and the changes in-between, make getting a grip on PT slippery. The question of the limitations of language, and choice of semantics, does not make giving an answer or explanation any easier. Freedom struggle and the romantic images thereof today, are different from a

few decades ago, so is the notion of a hero, or corruption, the latter now being referred to as almost acceptable since after all, it happens in most countries, so why not accept it here?

In the one-dimensional world of ANC *praxis* in black and white terms, when it suits them, symbols of yesteryear continue to fulfill various socio-political roles during different times in the history of the country – as the case against Zuma has shown and Graham, for example, has demonstrated. The aims – ‘to decolonize minds’ (Parker in Parker 2018: 9) and society have taken on elastic characteristics – not only in South Africa. Practically every new African leader, starts from scratch when getting into office. In South Africa the notion of National Democratic Revolution preceded the Rainbow Nation, African Renaissance, then a New Dawn, Radical Economic Transformation, Thuma Mina, or ‘I had a Dream’. The most recent lone view within the ANC, is that of Deputy General-Secretary of the ANC, Jesse Duarte, who is quoted from her Annual Albertina Sisulu Memorial Lecture as having said that ‘We are racist in the ANC because we marginalize people who are not black Africans...’ (original in Afrikaans. Boonzaaier 2019: 6).

For the purposes herein, PT is defined as ‘a *praxis* that relates to or denotes environments in which unbiased facts are less significant in affecting public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal conviction.’

Since the ‘modern era fraught with politics of power rather than principle’ Ngcukaitobi (2018: 5), it is easy to pick and choose what information one wants and then derives any desired conclusion/s by leaving part of the story out. This article has shown how Judge Pillay overcame this problem in this litigation. PT originates from people’s perceptions of the world around them and what they believe is true. Thus, PTs come from *personal beliefs*, and the human emotional world and not necessarily from facts. Conclusions that are derived in this way, and in so-doing creating ‘alt-facts’ (alternative facts), imply that almost anything can become true – whether it is correct or not. Correctness and truthfulness are both secondary. The result is that perception and belief becomes more important than the information itself (Ferguson, n.d.). The way in which this has become ‘acceptable’, ‘convincing’ or ‘credible’, is because the story (false narrative) has been repeated over and over again. This means that PT *operates in* a political and philosophical culture, but at the same time also *creates these* as two *cultures*. At the third level, *is a political and philosophical culture* in the web of life. Because unbiased facts are less significant, are commonly accepted objective standards that have dissipated, slipping through the cracks between facts and alt-facts of knowledge, personal opinion, personal belief and differently perceived and arrived-at truths. Empiricism has become compromised. As a result there are those scholars who argue that ‘[t]ruth is strangely perplexing [...] there are so many different versions of, and approaches to, truth that it is actually pertinent to [ask] whether the whole quest for truth is a complete waste of time’ (Higgs and Smith 2008: iv). For others, PT belongs to the ‘forces of production’.

In this context Micro-history has a role to play. Post-1994 critique of anticipated ‘progress’ has failed and led many historians to find ways to break with the hegemonic ANC-central Africanist perspective.

In other words, ‘the pursuit of history as critical reflection’ (Sabeen 2006: 276) of the ANC, is one way to reverse ‘[f]alse narratives about Southern African history [that] cannot be left unchecked’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]) where ‘failed politics and social discord’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]) are at play – seemingly no longer as the exceptional normal, but as the norm.

In addition, PT is characterized by lies, relativism, intentional falsehood, and untruthfulness. There appears to be a seamless existence sandwiched between fact, myth and fantasy. This position is not stable but rather resembles one of swinging pendulums between concepts. According to John Keane (2018) PT is ‘a drift towards politically threatening contradiction’ with a tendency towards readily and at times, eagerly ignored facts, and then rather to accept obvious lies, gamely. Since PT discourse is steeped in emotions rather than in empirical fact, there is a distinct difference, because PT is more than just the antithesis of empirical fact. It is made up of ‘an assemblage of different but interrelated phenomena – it defies expectations and confuse perception’ and includes ‘forms of public discourse commonly called bullshit’ (Keane 2018). It also depends on buffoonery and at other times actively tends to attract or gravitates around buffoonery. It promotes bits and pieces of imaginative communication to attract, distract and divert public attention and to interrupt the background noise of conventional politics and public life. At the same time PT hides from public attentions things it does not want others to notice or just simply leaves it out or purposefully ignore it. It reveals the art of contrivance, directed against the conventional styles of communicative behavior. Zuma’s apparent written proof why he fired Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, is an appropriate example.

PT is a form of gaslighting – a conscious and deliberate tactical form of psychological manipulation that seeks to instill self-doubt in personal or group memory, perception or sanity – as a weapon in the hands of the practitioner, a tool and means to an end, but at the same time, an end in itself, of the user on his/her way/s to power or proximity of power. It is an organized effort by public figures (but not limited to them) to employ lies, bullshit, buffoonery and silence for the purpose of sowing seeds of doubt and confusion amongst the subjects. It ruins human capacity to make judgements, to drive the target-human/s into submission. PT attacks enlightenment When a gas lighter says something, only to later say that they never said such a thing, and would never have dreamt to have said such a thing, they aim at gradually turning citizens into mere playdough of power. A few examples follow.

According to Gumede (2017, post-colonial ‘African leaders have been the most adroit exponents’ of manipulating the truth, distorting facts and fashioning attractive realities to cover-up their failures, to enrich themselves, and drum up mass support as a means to stay in power. In his view, Zuma has for a long time been the master of the PT genre. These African governments and leaders either completely misrepresent the truth and facts, use partial truths and or facts (or unestablished or unverified facts), or manipulate historical beliefs, fears, perceptions, prejudices and diverse cultural heritage of their citizenry to promote self-interest. With preconceived ideas comes blaming all their self-inflicted wrongs on the ‘machinations of those old enemies’ who will, so they say, return. Their rhetoric is ‘spiced up’ with just enough truth to ‘hoodwink the gullible’. For example, *apartheid* will without fail be blamed

for current woes. President Zuma blames the failure of ‘radical economic transformation’ on the workings of the ‘markets’, WMC and Western imperialism, but at the same time enriches his family by using state funds. Similarly, according to Onishi (2017), Grace Mugabe ‘had been known as “Gucci Grace” someone interested in shopping and leading a lavish lifestyle’ with seemingly no consciousness about the contradictions inherent in such a lifestyle.

Ranjeni Munusamy (2016) wrote: ‘The person asked [Zuma] whether in light of all the concerns raised by NEC members, ANC veterans, civil society and ordinary South Africans about his leadership and conduct, [if] Zuma would not consider a dignified exit. Zuma’s response was blunt. He said he would never resign as that would be giving into “imperialist forces”. He said he was “not about to please the enemy”. That, of course, was the end of that discussion’ but not the end of the matter. In this way PT is isolationist – it isolates or excludes fact from the rest, as well as the subject from further meaningful engagement. It reduces truth to insignificance and irrelevance – as Zuma did in relation to his downplaying of Hanekom’s struggle credentials. But not long thereafter, Zuma resigned.

A few months earlier, on 7 January 2019, only days before the ANC’s 106th Birthday Celebration, newly elected president Ramaphosa addressed a crowd in KZN and called for unity within the ANC. Only six months ago, Williams (2019) wrote: The truth is the ANC is rotten to the core [...] When President Cyril Ramaphosa says the ANC is United, everyone knows he’s not telling the truth. Ramaphosa preaches unity while ostensibly pursuing the truth. They are incompatible. Gerber (2019) also used the word ‘lies’ in his heading. According to Maughan (2019), Zuma’s lawyers claimed that the high court ruling was irrational, unreasonable and incompetent. His lawyers maintained in an application for leave to appeal the high court order barring him from accusing Hanekom as a ‘known enemy agent’ and ‘apartheid spy’, amounted to an ‘unconstitutional banning’ of Zuma’s rights to free speech.

The following realities stem from this litigation. That ‘*allegations* made about the applicant [...] are defamatory and false’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 2); and (in the view of Hanekom), that the ‘public should be “disabused of the *lies* that Mr Zuma is perpetrating”’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 7 [18]). The finding ‘on objective evidence in this application that it is Mr Zuma who propagates a false narrative about Mr Hanekom’ (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 24 [80]). Lastly, Judge Pillay’s finding that false narratives about Southern African history cannot be left *unchecked* (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 22 [75]. Emphasis added), leads to a number of important observations.

It has been shown in this study that microhistory has much to do with context. Contextualization reveals the inevitable micro-macro in life from which ‘big questions’ can and should be asked following evaluation of a meta-narrative. The fact that ‘constructs’ are a given, does not automatically imply pre-determined *a priori* research questions or outcomes. There is no necessary historical inevitability, or, if A then B, causal relationship.

The conflict that positions itself in the realm of the political, necessitates that ‘false narratives cannot be left unchecked’. This is because that if these ‘beliefs prevail, our democracy would unravel’ Judge

Pillay (Hanekom vs Zuma 2019: 19: 61) wrote. This equates to what Reinhold Niebuhr (Meyerhoff 1959: 329) referred to as ‘...the corruption and disintegration of a system of order.’ This is no small matter. Hanekom (2019) commented about this *after* the trial and explained that ‘wanton violence follows false allegations’ and how it was ‘fueled by misinformation, and old footage [that] have been circulated, provoking anger and hatred’. Similarly, the sentiment of ANA Reporter (2019) *after* the judgement was that Pillay’s judgement ‘...sends a strong message to others to steer clear from making baseless allegations.’ Such efforts are to protect the culture of constitutional democracy. For Cohen and Cohen (1993: 3) ‘culture sums up the values and habits of judgement, perception, and expression that give shape and colour to a particular social world’. The Judge’s **Order** seems to impact on the culture of perpetuating false narratives specifically for political gain. Earlier NO Athlone (2019) was more forthright: ‘It is time for the people of Africa to see through the lies of their dictators.’ But against the rising tide of PT, this is not so clear-cut: ‘We are prepared to die for Zuma. We are prepared to take up arms and kill for Zuma’ Julius Malema said on 16 June 2008, when addressing a Youth Day gathering in Thaba Nchu, in the Free State (Basson and Du Toit 2017: 17). But in only about four years, the truth has moved: this time Malema maintained: “‘We have seen under President Zuma democracy being replaced by a dictatorship...”” (Du Plessis in Basson and Du Toit 2017: 25). Similarly, senior ANC NEC member, Siphile Nyanda led an attack on Zuma in mid-June 2012 and ‘challenged him to prove that he was not a dictator’ (Letsoalo *et al.* 2012). Future historical research will pronounce on such views.

Conclusion

This discussion originated from Zuma’s tweet dated 25 July 2019. Its context places the tweet in close proximity to Micro-history’s far-reaching principle in relation to the history of the ANC. The discussion also touched on asking and answering ‘Big Questions’. The research shows that Micro-history has an important role to play to question for instance, a previous view about Zuma’s perceived political invulnerability and that it cannot be linked to asking ‘Big Questions’ or could be done so extra-contextually.

More than thirty years ago, John Hughes (1987: 1) argued that

...social sciences have tended to re-examine their philosophical foundations only during periods of crisis; periods when familiar and trusted methods no longer seem to justify the faith originally invested in them, when researchers lose confidence in the significance of their finding, and when obvious and taken-for-granted principles no longer seem quite so clear cut.

Hughes' observation is still valid today with the possible exception that it seems plausible to argue that social sciences today change their philosophical foundations often too soon; before they have even mastered new insights, they 'move on to the next'. But on the other hand, often also too late.

For all the critique that social history endured for some half a century now, for having largely failed in its relatively simple task of writing history from the bottom up, to critical views that microhistory has not really made a noticeable impact on the general course of historical writing, or to KR Popper's view that '...the social sciences do not as yet seem to have found their Galileo' (Popper 2005: 1), then Husson's view that I term 'methodological complementarianism', seems most attractive.

By all accounts, the micro-historical *approach* to studying small aspects of the past, seems not insulated from this. Magnússon (2003: 2) concedes: '...[t]oday, in the world of science, there is a general dissatisfaction with the status of theory.' One can safely agree with Magnússon (2003: 1) that there is no 'single, united whole in which scholars think and behave the same.' No wonder that Thomas Kuhn (1970: viii) wrote in the late-1950s that he was '...struck by the number and extent of the overt disagreements between social scientists about the nature of legitimate scientific problems and methods.' This applies also to politicians: Zuma's (and to borrow from Magnússon 2003: 1) focus in his defense against Hanekom was on '...the ostensible enemy....' He dogmatically stuck to the literal confines and meanings of his *beliefs* to the extent that it ruined his defense.

Zuma's dogmatism gave rise to a false narrative. *False narrative* is defined as an unchecked narrative perpetrated by the narrator that is based on and then perpetuates false statements, distorted objective historical facts and that reaches deep into PT *praxis* that seeks to convey a belief that would gather support for a hegemonic political disposition. It has previously been argued that 'Zuma-fication compromised a society that exposed its president, its ruling party and the government at large' (Engelbrecht 2016: 1).

On the other hand, Magnússon (2003: 4) defines *meta-narrative*

...as a continuous argumentation about a long-term social development, made up of arguments that are so tightly knit that they integrate events and phenomena into predefined molds designed to place them within a specified social context.

It has been an open secret for some time now, that in the inner circles of ANC, contestation marks its history from its inception. From a micro-historical perspective, this seldomly discussed aspect in public of ANC history, is an important observation. One of the cornerstones (and there are many more) of Micro-history, is the concept of answering 'Big Questions' based on a micro-historical study of a subject. Both Graham and Judge Pillay have exposed 'Big Questions' in relation to the history of the ANC: Graham's answer lies in the unravelling of 'myth', and Judge Pillay ruled on Zuma's 'false

narrative’. These two themes can lay the foundations for the interesting application of the historical comparative method in Micro-history. One example will suffice:

Former intelligence boss Riaz “Mo” Shaik believes former president Jacob Zuma could not separate his personal relationship with members of the Gupta family from his personal responsibilities as president

In his second appearance at the state-capture inquiry of Tuesday [26 November 2019], Shaik, once longtime friend of Zuma, said the former president was not fully cognizant of his constitutional responsibilities when he took office. (Umraw 2019: 4).

To deny micro-historical study the necessity of the meta-narratives, that is, to downplay the micro-macro link is to deny after all, that ‘we all inhabit, in the end, one finite interconnected space’ (Corry and Stevenson 2017: 1) called Earth. By leaving ‘big historical questions’ out of the meta-narrative, is to leave the project unnecessarily incomplete – a point that Sabean (2006: 284) made as follows:

that microhistory does two things at once – it calls attention to important aspects of human reality not captured by “master” narratives and it reconfigures these narratives rather than reproducing them.

Yet, ‘...the theoretical approach called *far-reaching microhistory*, is based upon the principle of confining oneself as far as possible to the unit of study itself, while also emphasising analysis of outside influences upon the subject’ (Magnússon 2016: 6). This remains attractive, despite Magnússon’s objectives to contextualization – to contextualize. But, ‘[f]ew, if any [historians], however, have completely rejected the idea that it may be desirable not to contextualize, as is my approach in the “singularization of history” model’ as Magnússon (2003: 2) reminds his readers.

It is inconceivable to think that Judge Pillay could have reached her verdict, without context. And it is also unlikely to think that Graham could have reached his research findings without historical contextualization. Fortunately, Graham gave a most successful overview of ANC historical contextualization and Judge Pillay rules against future use of false narratives. A deeper understanding of PT *praxis* linked to the ever-increasing importance of social media can contribute to a paradigm shift in micro-historical *praxis*. It is worth considering the view of Husson (n.d.: 8) when she wrote:

The use on microhistory has [...] become a complementary tool to understand certain wider processes [...] [a]ccordingly, along with other methodologies and as part of social history and cultural history, microhistory can now be

considered a necessary complementary method to analyse and complement traditional political history.

Micro-historical analysis can help to reverse the direction of PT *praxis* and explore new connections what minister Pravin Gordhan once called ‘connecting the dots’. It is possible to check multiple meanings and ambiguities. Some, however, should not be ‘left unchecked’. David W Sabeen (2006: 282) suggests the following:

[w]ith the detailed mapping of one system [...] the possibility of reevaluating [...] other contexts was opened up – the question was not, can we generalize beyond this instance [...] but how can we pose fresh questions (the heuristic issue)?

That is, despite most micro-historians’ continued reluctance to leave contextualization out of what Gordhan correctly called ‘connecting the dots’ (Basson and Du Toit 2017: 1).

A final brief concluding observation needs to be made as it relates to ‘...one of the main principles of microhistory: agency’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 67). Agency, for the purposes here, refers to societal structure (e.g. class), big processes (e.g. discrimination) or social relationships, placing *not only individuals* and their interactions at the center of lived historical life.

Together with the need of micro-macro links and contextualization, this expanded concept of agency, whilst respecting ‘...that ordinary people have always had room for action...’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 33), does not rule out the ‘Big Man or Woman’ agency. In so doing, it stretches the ‘singularization concept’ yet accommodates the view that ‘[g]eneralization is a key element in microhistory...’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 32). Therefore, agency is not just the everyday struggle for survival of ordinary people but at the same time it does not negate *culture as one agent* ‘...just as discourse acts through individuals...’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 40). There is an important warning imbedded in the above: ‘...Historical actors have responsibility...’ and keeping ‘...over-determination in mind can help micro-historians not to be too quick to give answers to their “great historical question” on the basis of their particular micro-analysis’ (Szijártó in Magnússon and Szijártó 2013: 69).

After all, structures, processes or social relationships, are in the first place, all human constructs with an unique agency dynamics to each.

Acknowledgment

I wish to thank Rita Engelbrecht for having read and commented on earlier drafts of this research. The outcome benefitted therefrom.

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